



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement of the United States Opening Session 2006 Annual Security Review Conference

As delivered by the Honorable Powell A. Moore
Head of Delegation and Representative of the Secretary of Defense
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Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me the opportunity today to speak on behalf of the United States.

The United States strongly supported the establishment of this conference three and a half years ago. At the time, there was a widespread recognition that an annual forum to broadly review the security dimension of the OSCE could enhance OSCE's contribution in this arena.

In its brief history, the ASRC has become a valuable venue where participating States can put forward initiatives to deal with security challenges. These initiatives are then available for possible development later into ministerial decisions. We look forward to contributing to this discussion. More importantly, we look forward to having the benefit of hearing the views and initiatives of others over the course of the next two days.

Just six days ago, President Bush met with his European Union counterparts in this very building. In the press conference that followed the summit, the President once again offered a reminder that the events of September 11, 2001 had a profound impact on America's approach to security challenges.

While the United States recognized terrorism as a major, growing threat prior to September 11, the events of that fateful day sharpened our focus. The heart of America's financial, political and military leadership had been targeted with reckless violence and it gained our attention.

If you will pardon a personal reference, on September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda terrorists got the attention of my family and me. When the Pentagon was attacked, I was in a meeting in our National Command Center in the Pentagon across the hall from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This meeting had been hastily convened to discuss the implications of the attacks in New York less than an hour before. The events of that day left 2,973 of our fellow citizens dead. This was the largest loss of life on American soil as a result of hostile attack in our Nation's history. And all of us were targets.

These events accelerated a shift in our National Security focus from traditional cross border challenges from nation states to Al Qaeda and other perpetrators of terrorism of nontraditional origins. This shift in focus is reflected in the President's National Security Strategy that followed. It says that "America is ...menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few."

This statement continues to reflect America's view of the current security situation worldwide and this security prism applies equally well to the OSCE region. All of us can find satisfaction in the progress that has been made toward a Europe that is whole and free. Fifteen years have passed since a bipolar super power rivalry provided a backdrop for the entire political, economic and security environment of Europe. Thank goodness, those days are gone. It has been seven years since the end of violence in the Balkans. But today we face new challenges that require an effort equal to the past. The need for unity of purpose is as urgent as ever.

The Permanent Council of the OSCE was recently reminded that the lifeblood of terrorism is illegal trafficking in narcotics, weapons, money and people. This reminder came a couple of weeks ago in a compelling briefing from the Intelligence Directorate of the U.S. European Command. This situation encourages a renewed focus on the border security initiatives of the OSCE.

Vigilant border inspections systems offer the most challenging hurdle in the movement of terrorists and the weapons and resources that are needed for their misdeeds. If they can be stopped at our borders, their ability to operate is greatly complicated.

All of us should applaud the professionalism in Canada that recently led to the break up of a serious terrorist plot aimed at Canada's governmental leadership. Seventeen alleged conspirators were arrested and charged by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. One of the key elements in unraveling this plot was the arrest of two men at the U.S.-Canadian border attempting to smuggle weapons. As we address the future of police work in the OSCE region, we may also want to keep in mind the vital role that police services, such as the RCMP have played in the fight against terrorism and look for ways to promote their effectiveness in that arena.

In addition to our focus on border security and policing, we should recognize that fragile and failing states are breeding grounds for terrorism. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said, "the greatest threats to our security are defined more by the dynamics within weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones."

For example, Afghanistan was most valuable as a base of operation for Al Qaeda when it was one of the weakest and dysfunctional states in the world.

The international community is better equipped to respond to a failing state with funding and expertise after a conflict has erupted, than it is in preventing instability from causing a full-blown crisis. The fundamental agenda of the OSCE can serve to advance the most effective prevention strategies and remedies for fragile and failing states: these include a commitment to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and free markets. This agenda should be advanced by the OSCE with renewed confidence.

Here in the OSCE we also have a valuable contribution to make in fulfilling our commitments on terrorism, especially in fulfilling our pledge to ratify and implement the universal counterterrorism conventions and protocols. This would include the one that was recently opened for signature on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism. The effective application of these conventions would go a long way toward stifling the terrorist threat. This ASRC should make a recommendation for the Brussels ministerial meeting this fall to push for ratification and implementation by all OSCE participating States.

Finally, our common security is advanced in the search to resolve conflicts on Eurasian landmass. As long as the embers of the unresolved conflicts in the Caucasus and elsewhere are still smoldering, there is a risk that they could ignite with much broader implications.

Mr. Chairman, the United States especially welcomes the new energy that the Belgian chairman has brought to the search for solutions to the unresolved conflicts.

Mr. Chairman, I hope our discussions of today and tomorrow will be continuing and consistent. We need to reach out for increased synergy with other multilateral organizations such as the European Union and NATO.

We should also expand our reach to the private sector. As just mentioned in the previous intervention by my distinguished Russian colleague, the Russian Federation and the United States will propose a conference next spring that will focus on promoting a stronger partnership among civil society organizations, the private sector and government in combating global terrorism. The conference would be conducted under the auspices of the 2007 Spanish chairmanship.

The dialogue must continue at this and other conferences and from this dialogue action plans will emerge that will turn the tide against the global scourge of terrorism.